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June 11, 2015

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: Marcia Mayeda
Director



Animal Care Center
(ACC) Locations

Agoura ACC
29525 Agoura Rd.
Agoura, CA 91301
(818) 991-0071

Baldwin Park ACC
4275 N. Elton St.
Baldwin Park, CA 91706
(626) 962-3577

Carson/Gardena ACC
216 W. Victoria St.
Gardena, CA 90248
(310) 523-9566

Castaic ACC
31044 N. Charlie Cyn.
Road
Castaic, CA 91384
(661) 257-3191

Downey ACC
11258 S. Garfield Ave.
Downey, CA 90242
(562) 940-6898

Lancaster ACC
5210 W. Avenue I
Lancaster, CA 93536
(661) 940-4191

**REPORT ON THE SHORTAGE OF ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS
IN THE LANCASTER-PALMDALE AREA
(ITEM NO. 1, AGENDA OF MAY 13, 2015)**

On May 13, 2015, your Board instructed the Director of Animal Care and Control to report back regarding the shortage of animal control officers (ACOs) in the Lancaster and Palmdale areas.

Department Service Area

The Department of Animal Care and Control (Department) provides all animal control services for the unincorporated areas, as well as 49 contract cities. In the Antelope Valley, the Lancaster Animal Care Center provides service for the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, as well as all unincorporated areas north and east to the boundaries of Kern and San Bernardino Counties, west to Quail Lake, and south to Santiago Road near Acton. In 2016, a new animal care center will open in the city of Palmdale. The jurisdictional areas described above will then be divided between the Lancaster and Palmdale Animal Care Centers. This report back to your Board includes all this service area, as call volume and demand will not change despite the opening of an additional animal care center.

Service Volume

This area is one of the Department's busiest service areas. More animal neglect and criminal violations such as dog fighting occur in this area. Dogs are routinely abandoned in the remote areas and are more difficult to capture due to the lack of fencing or other containment features. Officers from the Downey, Baldwin Park, and Carson/Gardena Animal Care Centers are

regularly sent to this area to assist the local animal control officers with coordinated "sweeps" to capture packs of dogs abandoned in the desert. This additional support is required to provide the necessary number of officers to successfully perform the captures and protect public safety. It should be noted that when these sweeps occur, the impact of low staffing is extended Countywide.

In Fiscal Year 2013-14, 15,935 calls for service were dispatched. During this same period, 9,291 dogs, 5,530 cats, and 1,594 other animals were impounded at the Lancaster care center.

Recommended Staffing Levels

The Humane Society of the United States and the National Animal Care and Control Association have established recommended staffing levels for animal control officers. Both these nationally known and respected industry leaders recommend an officer to population ratio of one officer for every 15,000 - 18,000 people. Additionally, the Department is a 24-7 operation and must staff appropriately to reasonably assure uninterrupted coverage for this important public safety service. Therefore, it uses the Sheriff's standard relief factor to adjust for illnesses, injuries, vacations, vacancies, and other absences to maintain 24-hour coverage.

The population served in this area is approximately 400,000 people. Based on the conservative ratio of one officer for every 18,000 people and the Sheriff's standard relief factor of 1.54, the Department should have 34 officers assigned to this vast area of high need and activity.

Calculation: $400,000 \text{ people} / 18,000 \times 1.54 = 34 \text{ officers}$

Current Staffing Levels

The Department is currently budgeted for 19 officers in this service area. This is a deficit of 15 officers. The staffing level of officers is only 44 percent of the recommended level. The Department only has between one and three officers on duty depending on the time of day. Further, the Castaic Animal Care Center does not have an officer on duty between midnight and 7:00 a.m., and the Lancaster officer is directed to respond to calls for this service area as well. It should be noted that ACO trucks only have amber light bars and must obey all traffic laws. They may not exceed the speed limit or drive through red traffic signals to respond more quickly.

Impact on Services

This severe staffing shortage poses critical public safety and animal welfare deficiencies. The Department classifies its calls for field response into four categories. These are:

Priority One: The most urgent calls. These include vicious dogs, injured animals, assistance for law enforcement officers, wild animals posing a threat to public safety, and loose dogs or dead animals on school grounds. The Department's goal is to respond to these calls within one hour. This goal is only met 34 percent of the time for this service area.

Priority Two: These are calls for confined stray animals. The Department prioritizes these next, as the animals are confined and the resident who requested service is waiting for an officer to arrive. The Department's goal is to respond to these calls within four hours. This goal is met 63 percent of the time.

Priority Three: These are calls for the removal of dead animals. Dead animals are a potential public health threat and interfere with residents' comfortable use and enjoyment of their property. The Department's goal is to respond to these calls within 24 hours. This goal is met 62 percent of the time. It should be noted this is a large increase over the Fiscal Year 13-14 goal rate of only 40 percent. This is because the Department contracted with a provider to assume these duties, thereby relieving this burden from field officers.

It can take more than one hour for an officer to respond to a call for service in the outer reaches of this service area.

Conclusion

The staffing level of animal control officers in the geographical area served by the Lancaster Animal Care Center is extremely low. National standards call for 34 animal control officers, but the Department is only budgeted for 19. This leaves an officer staffing deficit of 15 officers for this service area. Please note that as part of FY 2015-16 Final Changes, the CEO is recommending that 10 additional animal control officers be allocated for the Palmdale Care Center which is scheduled to open on or about June of 2016. With the additional officers, the Department's shortfall in staff will be reduced to 5 when compared to the recommended staffing levels by the National Animal Care and Control Association.

MM:in
S:BrdMemos:\Shortage of ACOs

c: Interim Chief Executive Officer, Executive Office, Board of Supervisors, County Counsel